

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 045328

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TO ALL EUROPEAN DIPLOMATIC POSTS

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TA;S: IT, PINT

SUBJECT: ITALIAN COMMUNISM

1. FOLLOWING CLAIRE STERLING PIECE "WHAT FUTURE FOR ITALY" WHICH APPEARED IN WASHINGTON POST ON FEBRUARY 14, 1976 MAY BE USEFUL TO YOU FOR BACKGROUND IN ANY DISCUSSION YOU MAY HAVE ON THAT ISSUE.

BEGIN TEXT.

2. IT'S GETTING PRETTY OLD HAT THESE DAYS TO SAY ANYTHING MEAN ABOUT THE ITALIAN COMMUNISTS, WHOSE IMAGE ABROAD -- ESPECIALLY COMPARED TO THE RULING CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS' -- IS BEGINNING TO LOOK MADLY ATTRACTIVE. NEVERTHELESS THEIR CHARMS CERTAINLY NEED CLOSER INSPECTION BEFORE WE ALL GIVE OUR BLESSING TO THE EMBATTLED CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS HERE FOR THE SHOTGUN WEDDING THAT MAY BE ONLY A MATTER OF MONTHS AWAY. FOR THE MOMENT THEY HAVE MANAGED TO PASTE TOGETHER A MINORITY GOVERNMENT, BUT IT DOES NOT HAVE THE LOOK OF A

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PAGE 02 STATE 045328

VERY DURABLE ARRANGEMENT. THEN WHAT?

3. IT IS POINTLESS TO ASK HOW SINCERELY ITALY'S COMMUNIST LEADERS ARE COMMITTED BY NOW TO WESTERN-STYLE DEMOCRACY: THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A SINCEROMETER, LENIN ONCE SAID. BUT THEY THEMSELVES HAVE REVEALED A GOOD DEAL MORE THAN THE

INTERNATIONAL PRESS HAS TENDED TO REPORT LATELY ABOUT JUST WHAT THEY MAY OR MAY NOT HAVE IN MIND, WHEN AND IF THEY JOIN THE GOVERNMENT.

4. NATURALLY THEY DON'T ALL THINK ALIKE. ONLY THE OTHER DAY, FOR INSTANCE, THEIR MOST DISTINGUISHED CATHOLIC INTELLECTUAL FRANCO RODANO CAME OUT WITH A BOOK EULOGIZING THE LATE STALIN'S RULE AS "CAESARIAN DEMOCRACY." NOTHING COULD BE FURTHER FROM THE THOUGHTS, SAY, OF THE PARTY'S "WESTERN-POLE" CULTURAL STAR GIORGIO NAPOLITANO, THOUGH EVEN HE RECENTLY CONFESSED HIS PERPLEXITIES ABOUT HOW TO "DEVELOP SOCIALISM WITHIN A DEMOCRACY" TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE "SPECIFICITY OF THE SOVIET EXPERIMENT."

5. WHATEVER THEIR INTERNAL DIFFERENCES, HOWEVER, THEIR PROPOSITION FOR A HISTORIC COMPROMISE ISN'T QUITE THE BARGAIN MANY TAKE IT FOR. FIRST OF ALL, ONE OF THE THINGS THEY DEMONSTRABLY DO NOT HAVE IN MIND IS THE SALVATION OF ITALY'S DEMOCRATIC PARTIES, PARTICULARLY ITS BIGGEST: A "RADICAL LIQUIDATION OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC POWER STRUCTURE" WOULD BE ESSENTIAL TO THE PROPOSITION, ACCORDING TO THE COMMUNIST WEEKLY RINASCITA. SO, ACCORDING TO THE SAME WEEKLY, WOULD A SYSTEM OF "PENETRATING CONTROLS ON THE USE OF PROFITS AND INVESTMENTS," AND A "NEW USE OF REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY" TO BRING ABOUT "PROFOUND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATIONS" LEADING A "NEW SOCIAL HIERARCHY" AND THE "HEGEMONY OF THE WORKING CLASS." UNLIKE THEIR FRENCH COUNTERPARTS, WHO ACTUALLY TALK OF DROPPING THAT WHOLE TURN-OF-THE-CENTURY MARXIST NOTION, TOP ITALIAN COMMUNISTS HAVE EXPLICITLY RENEWED THEIR COMMITMENT TO WHAT THE HIGH-RANKING PARTY LEADER ARMANDO COSSUTTA DESCRIBED TO ME NOT LONG AGO AS "A MODERN DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT BY CONSENSUS."

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PAGE 03 STATE 045328

6. IT IS POSSIBLE AND EVEN LIKELY THAT THE PARTY'S GENERAL SECRETARY, ENRICO BERLINGUER, HONESTLY MEANS TO STICK TO THE DEMOCRATIC RULES, OR TRY TO, WHILE MOVING TOWARD THAT ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE. TIME AND AGAIN, HE HAS ASSURED ITALIANS AND FOREIGN VISITORS ALIKE THAT, ONCE IN THE GOVERNMENT, THE COMMUNINISTS HERE WOULD NOT ONLY DEFEND FREEDOM OF SPEECH, PRESS, ASSEMBLY AND MULTI-PARTY ELECTIONS TO THE HILT BUT WOULD EVEN GO AWAY IF THE VOTERS

SHOULD TELL THEM TO. ON THE OTHER HAND, HE HAS ALSO WARNED THAT "IF RETROGRADE GROUPS" WOULDN'T LISTEN TO REASON, "WE COMMUNISTS WILL NEVER BE AFRAID TO RESORT TO THE SCALPEL WHEN NEEDED."

7. IT IS ALSO PROBABLE THAT BERLINGUER WOULD DO HIS BEST TO BE INDEPENDENT OF THE KREMLIN. HIS OWN ASSURANCES IN THAT REGARD ARE SURELY MORE CREDIBLE THAN THOSE OF THE PARTY'S MOST RENOWNED EX-STALINIST WARHORSE GIANCARIO PAJETTA WHO, IN POUNCING RECENTLY ON ITALIAN POLITICIANS IN THE CIA'S PAY, SPOKE VIRTUOUSLY ABOUT THE "GUARANTEE OF PATRIOTISM WE COMMUNISTS HAVE ALWAYS SHOWN" ALONG WITH "JEALOUS DEFENSE OF OUR AUTONOMY." YET EVEN BERLINGUER HAS NEVER CEASED TO REPEAT THAT ANY SERIOUS RUPTURE WITH THE KREMLIN WOULD BE UNTHINKABLE. "THERE IS NO NO-MAN'S LAND IN THE GREAT ARENA OF THE CLASS STRUGGLE," HE SAID ON THE EVE OF LAST YEAR'S PARTY CONGRESS. IF NOT FOR "OUR UNBREAKABLE TIES OF SOLIDARITY WITH SOVIET RUSSIA, THE OTHER SOCIALIST STATES AND THE WHOLE REVOLUTIONARY WORKING CLASS OF THE WORLD...WE WOULD LOSE OUR IDENTITY AS A COMMUNIST PARTY."

8. IN EXCHANGE FOR THIS LESS THAN ALTOGETHER REASSURING DEMOCRATIC COMMITMENT, THE COMMUNISTS WOULD PRESUMABLY BE OFFERING NOT JUST POLITICAL BUT ECONOMIC STABILITY. BERLINGUER PERSONALLY HAS CONCEDED THE NEED TO "COMBAT ATTITUDES THAT NEGATE THE HUMAN AND SOCIAL NEED TO WORK"--PRESUMABLY CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM, BOONDOGGING, WILDCAT STRIKES AND OTHER FORMS OF "INFANTILE LEFTISM" AS HE CALLS THEM--SO AS TO RESTORE THE "COMPETITIVITY" ITALIAN INDUSTRY HAS LOST SINCE THE WORKERS HERE LAUNCHED THEIR OWN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 04 STATE 045328

EMANCIPATION PROGRAM OVER THE COMMUNIST PARTY'S HEAD IN THE HOT AUTUMN OF 1969. THE COUNTRY'S NATIONAL MANUFACTURERS' ASSOCIATION, CONFINDUSTRIA, IS EVIDENTLY PINNING A LOT OF HOPES ON BERLINGUER'S REPEATED SUGGESTIONS THAT ITALIAN WORKERS OUGHT TO WORK MORE AND DEMAND LESS UNTIL INDUSTRY IS ON ITS FEET AGAIN AFTER SIX YEARS OF EVER-WORSENING RECESSION. YET IT IS DIFFICULT (IN FACT, IMPOSSIBLE) TO IMAGINE THAT BERLINGUER COULD MAKE THE WHOLE ITALIAN WORKING-CLASS HOLD STILL UNTIL THE ECONOMY IS FULLY RENOVATED, ALONG WITH EVERYTHING ELSE REQUIRING RENOVATION IN ITALY FROM TOP TO BOTTOM.

9. EVEN IF BERLINGUER WERE PREPARED TO TRY TO DELIVER THE ITALIAN WORKING-CLASS BOUND HAND AND FOOT, WHICH IS NONE TOO LIKELY, THE RISKS OF HIS PARTY WOULD BE APPALLING. IT

IS A LONG TIME SINCE THE ITALIAN COMMUNISTS HAVE BEEN THE AUTHENTIC OPPOSITION FORCE THEY STILL CLAIM TO BE: NO ITALIAN CABINET FOR WELL OVER A DECADE COULD HAVE HELD OUT FOR ITS STANDARD YEAR OR SO EXCEPT ON COMMUNIST SUFFERANCE. ONCE THE COMMUNISTS FORMALLY JOIN THE ESTABLISHMENT, THOUGH, SOME ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT GROUP OR ANOTHER IS BOUND TO COME

ALONG TO FILL THE ENORMOUS VACUUM THEY LEAVE ON THE LEFT. SHOULD THEY GO TOO FAR IN COLLABORATING WITH THE BOURGEOIS ESTABLISHMENT, WHAT'S MORE, PRACTICALLY ANY SUCH GROUP WOULD BE LIKELY TO GET AT LEAST AS MANY RUBLES FROM THE KREMLIN AS THE DOLLARS REPORTEDLY HANDED OUT BY THE CIA TO THIS COUNTRY'S DEMOCRATIC POLITICIANS. IF THERE IS ONE THING MOSCOW CAN'T STAND, IT IS A COMMUNIST-SET EXAMPLE OF BOURGEOIS COLLABORATIONISM--INCLUDING FREE TRADE UNIONS AS WELL AS A FREE PRESS, FREE SPEECH, FREE ELECTIONS-- TO UNSETTLE THE ALREADY QUEASY COMMUNIST REGIMES OF EASTERN EUROPE.

10. SOME DAY, ITALY'S DEMOCRATIC PARTIES MAY FEEL THEY HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO ACCEPT THE COMMUNISTS' OUTSTRETCHED HAND ON SUCH DUBIOUS TERMS. THERE ARE THOSE WHO SAY THE DAY HAS COME ALREADY. WHETHER IT HAPPENS OR NOT, HOWEVER, THOSE OF US REPORTERS WHO ARE SUPPOSED TO EXPLAIN THIS COUNTRY'S UNSPEAKABLY COMPLICATED POLITICAL PLIGHT ARE-- OR SHOULD BE-- MORALLY OBLIGED TO PRESENT THE BITTER WITH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 05 STATE 045328

THE BETTER. ANYTHING SHORT OF THAT IS NOT JUST PROFESSIONALLY INADEQUATE, BUT COWARDLY. "AFTER ALL," OBSERVES AN ITALIAN FRIEND, "YOU FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS CAN ALWAYS CLEAR OUT. WE'RE THE ONES WHO ARE GOING TO BE STUCK HERE." END TEXT.
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